

*Non-Canadian Publications*

has demonstrated its recognition that legislation aimed at one magazine may not be applicable to another. I ask that this same willingness to differentiate specific cases be extended to the broadcasting provisions of Bill C-58. We ask only that through these amendments good citizenry is recognized and that we recognize Canadian interest, as I have previously described it in the form of development facilities and good corporate citizenship.

● (1620)

Although I have spoken at some length in support of the amendments in the name of the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock to clause 3, I trust the House will not sense any contradiction if I address myself now to my own motion which asks that Bill C-58 be amended by deleting clause 3 entirely.

While the amendments we have been discussing so far would indeed, if adopted, mitigate some of the damage done by this legislation, especially in the west, the net result for the whole of Canada would still be negative and destructive. If the government is sincere in its desire to strengthen Canadian broadcasting, the way to do that is not by inserting isolated clauses in a bill such as Bill C-58 which is primarily concerned with the medium of print. What is called for is separate legislation dealing with the entire complex and confusing issue of the Canadian television system.

The absurdity of trying to deal with this measure in isolation from the rest of the government's television policy was illustrated by the opening comments of the chairman of the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts at the hearings on December 1, 1975. He recognized the futility of such an attempt when he said:

There is one other important point I would like to make before proceeding. Bill C-58 does not deal with commercial deletion. I want to try to limit the discussion to the subject referred to us by the House, namely, Bill C-58.

It might interest the committee to know that the sub-committee on program and procedure even decided to refuse to allow an important witness to appear before our committee because he wanted to speak about that very subject.

Later the chairman underlined the point by saying:

I shall try to prevent anyone from using the expression "commercial deletion".

In response to this ridiculous statement, my hon. friend from Kootenay West had this to say:

I think I understand you, Mr. Chairman. I just wonder how on earth the committee can separate the intrusion of the CRTC into this situation when it is such a one package sort of deal . . .

Is the steering committee suggesting to us that we must listen to the presentation by the Buffalo stations without regard to the CRTC involvement through their ruling . . . that the Buffalo stations continue to broadcast to our cablevision companies but without having the commercial content? Is that your recommendation to us? I just wonder how it is possible.

Of course there could not be any response from the chairman because he knew how right the hon. member was, and the subject was more or less dropped. The hearings continued in this emasculated fashion, forever skirting the real issue of Canada's over-all approach to U.S. border broadcasters. No one, least of all those foreign broadcasters whose future hung in the balance, came away

[Mr. Wenman.]

from our committee hearings with any feeling that justice had been done or, indeed, with the belief that any effort had been made to ensure that justice be done. I think this is completely agreed upon by all members of that committee. I would be hard-pressed to imagine that any member of the committee from either side of the House could bring himself to stand up and say that a democratic committee had given a just hearing to all the witnesses who were called. I do not think they would have the audacity to say so.

Recently I had another experience of the same kind when I presented an intervention on behalf of my constituents at the CRTC hearings held earlier this month in Vancouver. The surface issue involved was an application by the CBC for a licence to operate a French language television station in Vancouver. The real issue, however, was another aspect of the CRTC's cable television regulations. I refer to sections 6 through 8 of those regulations which empower the CRTC to dictate which stations may or may not be carried by cablevision operators.

The intent of these regulations is to ensure that local Canadian broadcasters, and particularly the CBC, shall have access to exposure on cablevision. In practice, however, they ensure that only Canadian stations will be seen in the lower mainland of British Columbia. As a result it will soon be the case that the 83 per cent of Vancouver residents equipped with cable will no longer have access to American programming which constitutes the viewing preference of 56 per cent of the citizens in the area.

Not surprisingly, there has been widespread resistance and hostility toward the policies of this government agency, policies which constitute nothing less than a severe infringement on the right of freedom of choice. Indeed, these rulings by the CRTC amount to out and out censorship and appear to be part of a concerted effort by the government to remove American programming from Canadian television screens. "If deleting their commercials doesn't work," they say, "why then, we'll just cut off their advertising revenues. And if all else fails, we'll simply bump them right off Canadian cablevision systems."

In my view this can only be seen as an expression of a particularly narrow-minded form of nationalism, the expression of a sense of national inferiority. The suggestion is inherent here that Canadian broadcasting can succeed only in an atmosphere free of competition or even of influence from any outside source. This is the suggestion which I view with abhorrence. It is an idea which I reject, and one moreover which has been rejected by the vast majority of Canadians who value their freedom of choice, who value the free flow of information, and who welcome the inflow of other cultures and ideas. It is a policy which has been rejected by all who feel that culture and taste cannot, and should not, be legislated, and who believe that no government, and no agency of government, has the right to control what Canadian citizens may view or read.

This is not an issue I intend to discuss at any further length today. I wish only to make the point that clause 3 of Bill C-58 does not stand alone but is a component of the government's entire approach to broadcasting in this country. It is an approach which meets with greater and greater resistance every day in all parts of Canada; it is an approach which raises serious questions about censorship